



**Director of  
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# **Cambodia: Vietnamese Strategy and the New Realities**

**National Intelligence Estimate**

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## CAMBODIA: VIETNAMESE STRATEGY AND THE NEW REALITIES

Information available as of 10 October 1985 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved on that date by the National Foreign Intelligence Board.

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### SCOPE NOTE

Vietnam's successful 1984-85 dry-season campaign along the Thai-Cambodian border, resulting conditions on both sides of that border, and subsequent diplomatic statements and maneuvers by Hanoi, ASEAN, and China are all indicators of new realities in Indochina. This Estimate examines these conditions and maneuvers, the probable course of events, as well as less likely alternatives.

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A recently completed Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, *The Capabilities and Order of Battle of Vietnamese Forces in Cambodia*, is a companion to this Estimate. The Key Judgments of that IIM have been included as annex A of this Estimate.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

Vietnam is determined that the situation in Cambodia be resolved on its own terms. Before significantly reducing its troop strength in Cambodia, Hanoi will insist that both Cambodia and Laos heed its direction and leadership under the rubric of "special relationship." We believe that it will not hesitate to wield a heavy hand if either smaller country demonstrates too much independence, especially in foreign affairs.

Hanoi believes a cohesive Indochina under its domination is a geopolitical imperative if it is to avoid being swallowed by what it views as a historically expansionist China.

If Hanoi achieves its objectives in Cambodia, one potential casualty would be the current congruence of Chinese and US interests opposing Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina; this could adversely affect the broader aspects of US-Chinese relations.

Vietnam has said that the Cambodian problem will be solved and its troops withdrawn within the next five years. Hanoi appears confident that the destruction of the resistance forces' bases in the last two years has laid the groundwork for the demise of the resistance. For Hanoi this is a serious timetable, not merely propaganda or wishful thinking.

There is little chance, however, that Heng Samrin's People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime will be able to fend for itself any time soon. Morale remains fragile, political reliability is often suspect, and technical and tactical proficiency are low.

Accordingly, our judgment, based on present trends, is that Hanoi has a better than even chance of achieving a de facto solution of the Cambodian problem by 1990. Significant Vietnamese force reduction would be possible, *although a substantial military presence will still be required for joint anti-insurgent operations and a large contingent of civilian advisers will be used to oversee the Heng Samrin apparatchiks.*

We believe that the resistance forces will not resolve either their internal leadership problems or their difficult relations with each other.

The resistance and its supporters are united only in the goal of bringing about a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. On other aspects of the issue, motivations differ and often collide:

- The non-Communist KPNLF and ANS are concerned lest Cambodia lose its identity.

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- The Communist Khmer Rouge agree, but are focused more on regaining exclusive power in Cambodia.
- ASEAN, too, seeks Vietnam's withdrawal; however, Indonesia sees Indochina as Vietnam's natural sphere of influence, while Thailand, Singapore, and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia take a hard line that aims at making the KPNLF and ANS forces competitive with the Khmer Rouge for control of a postoccupation Cambodia.
- China opposes Vietnam's hegemony in Indochina (seen, in part, as a plan by the Soviets to encircle China) and supports the Khmer Rouge as the best means of forcing Vietnam to compromise on Cambodia.

We believe there is an even chance that over the next five years a falling out with the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), a particularly tempting offer from Phnom Penh, or merely recognition of his own mortality could lead Prince Sihanouk to make serious contact with his Vietnamese-backed adversaries in an effort to engineer a rapid compromise solution.

In our judgment, China, while it will continue to support the resistance forces and apply military pressure on Vietnam itself, will not chance the extreme degree of direct offensive action against the Vietnamese that would compel them to alter their Cambodia strategy.

The Soviets will continue to provide military and economic support to Vietnam in order to sustain the alliance and assure continued access to Cam Ranh Bay, and as a means of applying pressure on the Chinese regardless of changes in the atmosphere of Sino-Soviet relations.

Furthermore, we believe that Vietnam is more determined and steadfast over the long run than Thailand and its ASEAN partners. Most important in its calculation is the assumption that the resolve of its ASEAN opponents, especially Thailand, will weaken over time and with the introduction of new leaders who lack a stake in current policy. While we do not anticipate outright rupture of the ASEAN front on Cambodia, consensus will be more difficult to maintain.

A settlement that left Communist administration in Phnom Penh, in our judgment, could lead a significant proportion of the 230,000 displaced Khmer now in encampments inside Thailand to elect not to return to their country.

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## DISCUSSION

1. Vietnam is determined that the situation in Cambodia be resolved on its own terms. Its fundamental objective in Cambodia is to have a government responsive to its direction and free of any other significant external influence, particularly from China or Thailand. Hanoi believes a cohesive Indochina under its domination is a geopolitical imperative if it is to avoid being swallowed by what it views as a historically expansionist China. ☐

2. Hanoi has made a huge investment in Cambodia, and we believe that before it is willing to consider compromise seriously it will have to be assured that its investment is protected. In general terms this means essential control over Cambodia (and Laos) with minimum practicable visibility. We believe that before significantly reducing its troop strength in Cambodia Hanoi will insist that both Cambodia and Laos heed its direction and leadership under the rubric of "special relationship." In our judgment, it will not hesitate to wield a heavy hand if either smaller country demonstrates too much independence, especially in foreign affairs. ☐

#### Vietnam's Incentive To Solve the Cambodian Problem

3. By Vietnamese lights it is necessary to solve the Cambodian problem in order to achieve the related objectives of:

- Stabilizing Cambodia under Hanoi's hegemony.
- Attaining progress in economic development.
- Relieving military pressure from China.
- Restoring Cambodia's position in the UN and in Third World forums.
- Ending economic and diplomatic isolation from the West.
- Normalizing relations with the United States. ☐

4. Hanoi appears confident that the destruction of the resistance forces' bases in the last two years has laid the groundwork for the demise of the resistance in the coming years. Hanoi has set 1987 as the date for victory, although it points to 1990 as the date for

#### Glossary

**ANS** - Armee Nationale Sihanoukienne - the military arm of Prince Sihanouk's anti-Vietnamese resistance faction.

**ASEAN** - Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei.

**ASEAN Three** - Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand—the primary supporters of the non-Communist resistance.

**CGDK** - Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, comprising the ANS, DK, and KPNLF.

**DK** - Democratic Kampuchea—the Khmer Rouge.

**KPNLF** - Khmer People's National Liberation Front, led by Son Sann. Along with the ANS, makes up the non-Communist resistance.

**PRK** - People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Vietnamese-controlled regime in Phnom Penh under the nominal control of Heng Samrin.

In this paper "Khmer" and "Cambodian" are used interchangeably to refer to the people of Cambodia. ☐

completing its military pullout. It has issued what amounts to an ultimatum to ASEAN and China that, unless they agree to negotiate a political settlement by 1987, the situation will "take care of itself." In either case, Hanoi clearly anticipates an outcome largely on its own terms. ☐

5. Whether the Vietnamese will meet their timetable depends on a number of factors, such as ASEAN resolve and cohesion, and the ability of the Cambodian resistance to survive and to expand operations. Even if Hanoi's schedule for withdrawal proves unrealistic, we see little prospect that Vietnam will compromise its fundamental objectives in Cambodia. ☐

#### Goals and Objectives of the Cambodian Resistance and Its Supporters: Wishful Thinking?

6. The three Cambodian resistance groups and their external supporters—primarily ASEAN and China—

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are in fundamental agreement on the goal of bringing about a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. But each party has motivations that at times collide with one or more of the others'. [ ]

7. The *non-Communist resistance* groups under Son Sann and Prince Sihanouk are concerned about the prospect that Cambodia will soon lose its identity as a nation. Neither believes an outright military victory over Vietnam is realistic, but both believe that increasing military pressure must be applied in order to convince Hanoi of the need to compromise. They believe they have potentially widespread popular support throughout Cambodia, but must receive increased and sustained external support in order to exploit it. Both groups are deeply concerned about their ability to compete with the Khmer Rouge and agree on the need to prevent its return to power in the event of a Vietnamese withdrawal. [ ]

8. The *Khmer Rouge* has the same fundamental goal as its non-Communist counterparts of preventing the "Vietnamization" of Cambodia. But while it nominally cooperates with the non-Communist groups in the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, and has made a series of efforts to present a more moderate image, we believe the Khmer Rouge still envisions a return to exclusive power. This would be accomplished, not by military victory over Vietnam, but by a power struggle among Cambodian factions following a Vietnamese pullout. In the meantime, the Khmer Rouge jealously safeguards its "liberated areas" from competitive non-Communist guerrilla efforts to expand influence in the Cambodian interior. [ ]

9. ASEAN's goal is to secure Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and the holding of popular elections under international auspices. It has relied primarily on diplomatic pressure through yearly resolutions passed by overwhelming margins by the UN General Assembly in efforts to isolate Hanoi. ASEAN opposition has also thwarted Hanoi's efforts to unseat the CGDK at the UN. In June 1982, ASEAN prevailed on the three resistance groups to form a loose coalition in order to attract and sustain international backing for anti-Vietnamese forces. [ ]

10. While ASEAN has been successful in sustaining a broad consensus against Vietnam's Cambodia policy, differing perspectives within its ranks have frequently served to undermine its effectiveness. A "soft line" faction led by Indonesia essentially assumes that Indochina is Vietnam's natural sphere of influence and, in fact, serves as a useful buffer against a potentially greater threat from China. Elements in the Malaysian

Government hold similar views and apparently could reconcile themselves to Vietnamese domination over Cambodia provided Hanoi pulled its troops out. Appreciation of Thailand's security concerns and the political benefits ASEAN derives from its united front would, however, probably rule out an open split on the Cambodia issue. [ ]

11. The ASEAN Three have taken a harder line on Cambodia. Since late 1982, they have cooperated in efforts to increase military pressure on Vietnam by [ ]

12. *Thailand* is the ASEAN country most directly affected by Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, considering itself to be ASEAN's "frontline state." Bangkok not only is concerned about the immediate threat of hostile actions from Vietnamese forces on Thailand's borders, but is deeply worried about the long-term prospects for subversive action if Hanoi is allowed to consolidate control over Indochina. [ ]

13. *China* itself remains steadfast in its opposition to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. Beijing not only opposes a rival power center that a united Indochina would represent, but also seeks to blunt Moscow's use of Vietnam in its purported strategy of encirclement of China. Beijing is the largest single material supporter of all three resistance groups, but has aroused suspicion within ASEAN by providing the bulk of its aid to the Khmer Rouge. Beijing has sought to counteract these perceptions through public expressions of support for a future non-Communist Cambodia and by asserting that the imbalance in aid to the resistance parties is predicated solely on the greater effectiveness of the Khmer Rouge against the Vietnamese. Nevertheless, China's continued heavy support of the Khmer Rouge has to some extent undermined ASEAN efforts to improve the relative capabilities of the non-Communist resistance. [ ]

14. China also applies continuous military pressure on Vietnam's northern border. By limiting its operations mostly to a single, isolated salient, however,

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Beijing has signaled that forceful action on the scale of its 1979 invasion is not likely in the foreseeable future. Beijing's border posture requires Hanoi to keep approximately half of its million-man army, armed with superior Soviet equipment, committed in northern Vietnam. By the same token, however, those forces represent a major deterrent to large-scale Chinese attack. ☐

### Vietnamese Strategy

#### Fighting . . .

15. Hanoi has employed a mix of military intimidation and diplomatic guile since 1979 in attempting to gain acceptance of its control over Cambodia. But since early 1984 it has mounted the most determined and coherent combination yet of its "fight, fight, talk, talk" strategy to bring about a favorable and decisive outcome. The centerpiece of its strategy has been to gain an overwhelming military position against the three resistance groups in Cambodia. In this respect the 1984-85 military offensive was highly successful for the Vietnamese. The military situation has moved from stalemate to one in which the Vietnamese retain the strategic initiative. Thai border bases of each of the three resistance groups, whose forces have greatly increased since 1980, were destroyed or disrupted. Instead of pulling back the bulk of its forces to interior garrisons during the rainy season, as in previous years, the Vietnamese have conducted aggressive sweep operations in concert with PRK forces that have sharply restricted resistance efforts to exploit the tactical advantages afforded by the heavy rains. ☐

16. A "national defense campaign" in which thousands of Cambodian civilians were conscripted to build roads and border defense fortifications was also mounted as a means of restricting guerrilla access to the interior. The PRK government at the same time intensified psychological warfare operations to entice resistance supporters to the government's side. ☐

☐ Hanoi hopes that the net effect of these efforts will be the eventual destruction of the will and capability of the resistance and its supporters to continue, while improving conditions for the PRK to consolidate its capabilities. ☐

#### . . . and Talking

17. In the diplomatic arena, Hanoi has been equally assertive. Without yielding on any fundamental issues, it has sought to build on its military position by suggesting greater willingness and flexibility in seeking

a diplomatic solution. The 1985-86 political offensive is designed to exploit the military success of 1984-85 and to create the impression of an irreversible situation in Cambodia. The political offensive has several components, including: ☐

- Play on the less committed members of ASEAN—Indonesia and Malaysia—with an eye to dividing the united ASEAN front and undermining Bangkok's policy toward Cambodia. ☐
- Keep alive the specter of brutality during the Khmer Rouge regime. ☐
- Create the impression that discussions on the POW/MIA issue with the United States represent general headway on regional issues such as Cambodia. ☐
- Appeal to sympathetic elements in third countries, especially Australia and Japan. ☐
- Attempt to divide and suborn the Khmer resistance, especially Prince Sihanouk. ☐
- Work at developing the capabilities and credibility of the Heng Samrin regime. ☐

### Probing ASEAN

18. Hanoi has attempted to suggest that a process of dialogue on Cambodia has begun. A primary tactic has been to intensify efforts to split ASEAN by exploiting the differing perceptions within the group on how to deal with the Cambodia issue. Hanoi has concentrated particularly on detaching Indonesia, traditionally more accommodating toward Vietnam, from the rest of the group. (See inset on next page.) For example, it has tried to portray bilateral talks between Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Thach in August as part of an ASEAN-Indochina dialogue. Hanoi has also stepped up courting of Malaysia, which, although nominally a participant in the hardline ASEAN Three grouping with Singapore and Thailand, has shown signs of receptiveness to Vietnamese overtures. ☐

19. At the same time, Hanoi has taken a generally harsh approach toward Thailand, castigating Bangkok for cooperating with China in aiding the Khmer Rouge and for allowing the resistance to use Thai territory. Through its Lao surrogate it has attempted to exploit a dispute involving three villages on the Thai-Laotian border to put Bangkok on the defensive in the UN and embarrass ASEAN members in the Non-aligned Movement. There also are elements of overt intimidation in the increased frequency of Vietnamese

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**The Jakarta Connection**

The flirtation between Indonesia and Vietnam has complex roots and takes several forms. At one level it is the product of supposedly similar post-World War II anticolonial experiences, resulting in a revolutionary kinship. Both countries, for different reasons, share the view of China as the major long-term security threat to the region.

They have also stirred reaction in Malaysia, which often tends to attempt to outdo its Malay cousins in Indonesia, and which shares the concept of China as a long-term security threat.

military intrusions into Thailand in pursuit of Khmer resistance forces. Hanoi is aware of the anxieties in some Thai quarters—government and private—over the increased risks and costs entailed in Thailand's continuing confrontational stance. Some Thai officials are concerned the Vietnamese will mount future cross-border incursions as a means of accentuating such concerns.

**Communist Versus Communist**

20. Despite an effort to appear more flexible, Hanoi has remained consistent in its outlook toward the role of the Khmer Rouge. The minimum Vietnamese goal is the end of the Khmer Rouge as a political and military entity, including, but not limited to, the

"elimination of Pol Pot and his accomplices."<sup>1</sup> We believe Hanoi would be willing to co-opt current Khmer Rouge Communists, other than the top leaders, just as it did former Khmer Rouge Communists such as Heng Samrin and Hun Sen. Indeed, Hanoi says rank and file Khmer Rouge would be welcome if they renounce their ties to the group.

21. The depth of Hanoi's conviction about the Khmer Rouge issue is hard to overstate. Aside from the brutal border attacks that were the *casus belli* for the Vietnamese invasion, the group is seen by Hanoi as an instrument of China's strategy to keep Vietnam weak. From Hanoi's standpoint, to accede to survival of the Khmer Rouge in any meaningful form would risk an enduring threat to its national security.

22. Both China and the Khmer Rouge itself oppose Hanoi's attempts to remove Pol Pot and other top leaders.<sup>2</sup> Although little is known of a "second generation" Khmer Rouge leadership, we believe the departure of the existing leadership would have major repercussions for a movement whose cohesion is already suspect. Aside from any efforts by Hanoi to undermine the group, the ability of the Khmer Rouge to maintain internal discipline as current top leaders move on will critically affect its future standing.

**Heng Samrin's PRK: Nurturing a Puppet**

23. Hanoi continues to nurture the slow development of the PRK regime and army. The regime has demonstrated scant capacity for self-governance thus far, and there is little evidence that Hanoi has begun to wean it from dependence on the Vietnamese advisory presence that makes or approves most major decisions.

24. The PRK armed forces generally perform very poorly and remain weak and politically unreliable.

<sup>2</sup> Despite the recent announcement of Pol Pot's retirement, we believe he retains control of the Khmer Rouge. The announcement was the latest of several cosmetic measures to improve the group's image.

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However, there is evidence of modest headway. In the past two years, at least one new PRK division has been created, armor and artillery units have become operational, MIG aircraft and pilots have been readied for service, and several small naval craft have been delivered. Provincial military units and local militias have been organized in many areas of the countryside. Main-force units deployed in border areas have seen increasing frontline duty and are being groomed to assume many of the anti-insurgency functions heretofore carried out by Vietnamese forces. [ ]

25. Nevertheless, there is little chance that the PRK will be able to fend for itself any time soon. Morale remains fragile, political reliability is often suspect, and technical and tactical proficiency are low. Hanoi will have little choice in the next several years but to continue providing for the bulk of the PRK's security needs, albeit with a reduced presence. [ ]

### The US Factor

26. Both ASEAN and Hanoi see the United States as an important element in an eventual Cambodian settlement. On his own initiative, Mochtar has extended the lure of normalization with Washington—the “new dimension” in his strategy—as Hanoi's reward for concrete measures to resolve the POW/MIA issue and compromise with ASEAN on Cambodia. Meanwhile, the ASEAN hardliners—notably Singapore and Thailand—have been increasingly vocal in urging increased US aid to the non-Communist resistance. Aside from its symbolic impact, Singapore views US aid as a useful counterweight to potentially excessive Chinese influence on Thailand. Both Singapore and Bangkok also hope an initially modest US support effort would increase over time. [ ]

27. Hanoi apparently agrees with Mochtar's assessment of the US factor. Hanoi has made explicit its interest in normalization, and in that connection has recently made sudden gestures of cooperation on the POW/MIA issue. In our judgment, Vietnam will continue to attempt to exploit this issue to create the illusion of broad-based progress toward US-Vietnamese normalization. For example, in a recent letter to about a hundred countries comprising Vietnam's “close friends,” Hanoi falsely claimed that a recent US mission to Hanoi resulted in progress on POW/MIAs and “other matters of mutual concern,” when, in fact, only the former issue was raised by either side. Despite the inevitable US denial, Hanoi probably feels it has been able to add to the impression that the diplomatic tide is flowing its way, and we believe that it will continue to take advantage of such occasions in this fashion. [ ]

### Seducing Sihanouk

28. In mid-1984 the Vietnamese and Heng Samrin made quiet attempts to set up meetings between CGDK President Sihanouk and PRK Foreign Minister Hun Sen in Paris. The Chinese and Sihanouk's CGDK partners vetoed such meetings, to the Prince's great agitation. Hanoi has since declared it will “never” talk with Sihanouk, but did not rule out contacts with his subordinates (such as his son Prince Ranarith) or contacts between Sihanouk and the Heng Samrin regime. [ ]

29. Sihanouk has publicly and repeatedly stated his distaste for his coalition partners, particularly the Khmer Rouge, and his pessimism about the future toward which Cambodia is being taken. He has also repeatedly stated his belief that all Cambodian factions, including that of Heng Samrin, must talk together; in that line he has recently proposed an international “colloquium” at which all four groups could be represented. [ ]

30. We believe there is an even chance that over the next five years a falling out with the CGDK, a particularly tempting offer from Phnom Penh, or merely recognition of his own mortality could lead Sihanouk to make serious contact with his Vietnamese-backed adversaries in an effort to engineer a rapid compromise solution. However, the actions of the volatile Prince, who has switched sides in previous Indochinese conflicts, are always difficult to predict. [ ]

### The Sino-Soviet Calculus

31. The strategic benefits that the Soviets derive from their relationship with Hanoi, including the use of facilities at Cam Ranh Bay, will continue to take precedence over any inducements Beijing is likely to offer. Nevertheless, the one political contingency that would impact sharply on Vietnam would be a dramatic further improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, accomplished at Vietnam's expense, a factor which Hanoi may worry about but which we believe is unlikely during the next two to three years. In any event, Hanoi's mistrust of Moscow's long-term reliability will provide an additional incentive for Hanoi to resolve the Cambodia issue as early as practicable. [ ]

32. Hanoi has made [ ] overtures to Beijing to begin talks and has tried to convey an

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overall impression of improved relations with China despite Beijing's rejection of its overtures. On the military front, Vietnam seems confident that it can absorb and contain the costs China imposes on its Cambodian policy. We believe Hanoi has calculated that its own defensive measures and Beijing's preoccupation with economic development make it unlikely that China will mount a "second lesson" similar to its invasion in 1979. This permits Hanoi considerable leeway in pursuing its strategy in Cambodia. [ ]

**Can the Resistance Reverse the Tide?**

33. Hanoi's strategy has not only been an immediate setback to the resistance, but poses an increased obstacle to future efforts by the latter to develop and sustain guerrilla warfare. The Khmer Rouge have been relatively successful in transferring the locus of the fighting from the Thai border area to the interior since early this year. Most of their able-bodied troops have moved into the provinces and carried out an active guerrilla campaign against highways, railroads, local government facilities, and market areas. [ ]

[ ] To date, however, their attacks do not appear to have provoked major adjustments in Vietnamese and PRK defenses. [ ]

34. The Khmer Rouge will retain their dominance within the resistance and will remain a security threat in many areas of the countryside. However, the group is not likely to threaten seriously Vietnam's strategic advantage. There has been no solid evidence of growth in Khmer Rouge ranks in the past year or two, and recruitment efforts probably do little more than replace losses, if that. There are also occasional signs of dissent within the group, but the leadership has managed to prevent significant erosion in overall discipline. [ ]

35. Non-Communist troops have had little success in implementing their announced strategy of waging guerrilla warfare deep in the Cambodian interior. Although both the ANS and the KPNLF have plans for infiltrating well over half of their forces into Cambodia by the end of the year, their record thus far suggests they will fall well short of that goal. Vietnamese sweeps, combined with their own internal limitations, have limited most non-Communist forays to

areas little beyond traditional zones of operation along the border. [ ]

36. Aside from the military obstacles facing the non-Communists, they have severe internal deficiencies. The KPNLF, in particular, is racked by factionalism that has directly contributed to the inability of the group to mount a systematic guerrilla warfare effort. Fundamental questions persist regarding the morale and motivation of KPNLF soldiers and of those commanders who have lost access to lucrative black markets and have displayed little interest in the rigors of guerrilla warfare. [ ]

37. The ANS forces, thanks to more capable leaders, have made surprising headway over the past year and have surpassed the KPNLF in military effectiveness. They have also mounted systematic infiltration efforts and developed contacts with the local populace. But they also are troubled by internal rivalries, and Vietnamese pressure as well as Khmer Rouge harassment has kept them offguard and limited the depth and duration of their operations. [ ]

39. The same constraints that impede progress against the Vietnamese also offer little hope that the non-Communists can close the gap in effectiveness and influence with the Khmer Rouge. The latter have demonstrated repeatedly, despite pressure from China and Thailand to desist, that they will directly oppose non-Communist efforts to expand operations significantly, particularly when they move into areas the

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Khmer Rouge consider to be their turf. Non-Communist leaders complain of "having to fight the Vietnamese with one hand and the Khmer Rouge with the other." There is little reason to believe this fundamental dilemma can be resolved.<sup>3</sup> [ ]

40. Inability of the non-Communists over a two- or three-year period to improve their standing relative to the Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge would be likely to have severe implications for non-Communist morale. Both Prince Sihanouk and his son Prince Ranarith are pessimistic over resistance military prospects—continued inertia and military setbacks would raise the risk that they would abandon the effort. [ ]

## Outlook

### Vietnam in the Driver's Seat . . .

41. Our judgment, based on present trends, is that Hanoi has a better than even chance of achieving de facto solution of the Cambodian problem by 1990. We believe that the Vietnamese will be able to seriously restrict resistance guerrilla activity and prevent the establishment of liberated areas. At the same time we believe that the resistance forces will not resolve either their internal leadership problems or their difficult relations with each other. Significant Vietnamese force reductions would be possible, although a substantial military presence albeit disguised in some way, will still be required for joint anti-insurgent operations and a large contingent of civilian advisers will be used to oversee the Heng Samrin apparatchiks. We note that in Laos there are roughly 45,000 Vietnamese troops and several thousand civilian advisers. The residual Vietnamese presence in Cambodia probably would not be less than this. [ ]

42. In our judgment, China, while it will continue to support the resistance forces and apply military pressure on Vietnam itself, will not chance the extreme degree of direct offensive action against the Vietnamese that would compel them to alter their Cambodia strategy. The Soviets will continue to provide military and economic support to Vietnam in order to sustain the alliance and assure access to Cam Ranh Bay, and as a means of applying pressure on the Chinese regardless of changes in the atmosphere of Sino-Soviet relations. [ ]

<sup>3</sup> A situation in which the Khmer Rouge sustained or widened the gap with the non-Communists would also threaten ASEAN unity. Although Thailand and Singapore would probably want to continue their aid in order to keep the non-Communist option alive as long as possible, Malaysia might be persuaded by Vietnam's claims that further opposition is futile. [ ]

43. The primary factor underlying these judgments is our estimation that Vietnam is more determined to accomplish its primary objectives in Cambodia than any other non-Khmer party to the affair, and has a greater investment to protect. By Hanoi's security calculus, Cambodia is simply too important to permit compromise on fundamental issues. Specifically, we believe Vietnam is more determined and steadfast over the long run than Thailand and its ASEAN partners, and has a greater investment to protect than does China. [ ]

44. It is our judgment that Vietnam will attempt to reduce its presence to the extent consistent with the security situation. In this connection we believe that Hanoi calculates it can contain damage done by the resistance and ultimately demoralize it through a combination of internal security operations and border interdiction, while building up the Heng Samrin administration to a semblance of a functioning government. Most important in its calculations, however, is the assumption that the resolve of its ASEAN opponents, especially Thailand, will weaken over time and with the introduction of new leaders without a stake in the current policy. [ ]

45. Under these circumstances, Indonesia and perhaps Malaysia would probably attempt increasingly to dilute ASEAN's position and reach a political compromise, particularly if Hanoi continues its current ostensibly flexible diplomatic line. ASEAN's stance would be undermined if Sihanouk or Son Sann abruptly reconciled with the PRK regime. A softening of Thailand's position toward Vietnam would also result in a rapid reformulation of ASEAN policy. Such a Thai policy shift could occur by 1990 if, for example, there were a new government in Bangkok or if Cambodia became a divisive domestic issue. We do not anticipate outright rupture of the ASEAN front on the Cambodia issue. Nevertheless, the ASEAN consensus will be more difficult to maintain. [ ]

### . . . but Without a Seatbelt

46. Alternatively, several incipient problems could dim Vietnam's prospects. For example, while we believe the Vietnamese are aware of the implications of the historical animosity the Khmer feel for them, their continued presence over the next few years could cause widespread popular resentment leading to active support for resistance. This could be the result of Vietnamese civilian settlement in Cambodia, as well as the military presence. Another factor is the continued conscription of thousands of Khmer laborers to construct barriers in hostile and malaria-ridden areas of the Cambodia-Thailand border. [ ]

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47. We cannot rule out the possibility that the CGDK resistance forces could solve their leadership and image problems and galvanize the Khmer people into more active opposition to the Vietnamese occupation. This might occur through death or resignation of some of the more controversial figures in both the non-Communist and DK factions, or by leverage exerted by aid donors. [ ]

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48. Finally, and least likely, the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, reportedly scheduled for spring 1986, could produce a new set of leaders in Hanoi who would be concerned more with development issues than with the overamplified security concerns represented by the Cambodian venture. Such leaders would presumably be quicker to make concessions and withdraw from Cambodia.<sup>4</sup> [ ]

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#### Implications of a Vietnamese-Controlled Cambodia

49. Implications of a successful consolidation of Vietnamese control over Cambodia would depend largely on the manner in which it was achieved. For illustration we postulate two basic scenarios—one a contentious process in which ASEAN unity disintegrates and Hanoi gets its way largely by default; and the other a face-saving formula that would allow ASEAN a graceful means of ending its opposition and formally accepting a Vietnamese fait accompli. [ ]

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50. For ASEAN, dissipation of the political consensus that has been the most effective obstacle to Hanoi's goals in Cambodia would significantly undercut the organization's international political stature. Agreement on Cambodia has been ASEAN's most powerful rallying point since 1979. A bitter split between ASEAN softliners and hardliners over Cambodia could adversely affect economic and political cooperation in the region, but a sustained disruption in ASEAN relations would be unlikely. Collapse of the consensus on Cambodia could lead Thailand to "go it alone," with China and Singapore providing some support for the resistance for a time, but the loss of the ASEAN diplomatic stand could also lead to domestic pressure on Thai policymakers to reach an accommodation with Vietnam. While the breakdown of a consensus over Cambodia and the ultimate playing out of an accommodation with Hanoi could contribute to in-

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<sup>4</sup> While the emergence of a Vietnamese Deng Xiaoping cannot be discounted, our best estimate at this time is that the next generation of leaders in Hanoi, heavily influenced by the Soviets and lacking the revolutionary ethos of the current group, will be at least as rigid and doctrinaire. [ ]

creased inter-ASEAN suspicions, it is doubtful that existing bilateral differences would be allowed to fester. Each ASEAN member has a vested interest in regional security and the broad variety of regional contacts should help to smooth over differences regarding relations with the Vietnamese. [ ]

51. A more likely scenario is that ASEAN, led by Indonesia and Malaysia, would gradually ease into a face-saving accommodation that recognized Vietnam's dominance in Cambodia and permitted ASEAN to contain damage to both its external image and internal viability. Thailand, however, as the "frontline state" in ASEAN, would require continuing reassurances of support from fellow members in dealing with a consolidated Indochina. A withdrawal of Vietnamese troops—almost certainly a prerequisite for any ASEAN-Vietnamese deal—would go far in assuaging Bangkok's concern, but Thailand's fears over long-term Vietnamese subversive efforts would require attention by ASEAN. [ ]

52. *China* would probably continue to oppose Hanoi's policies in Indochina regardless of a general acceptance by others of Vietnam's dominion over Cambodia. Beijing's leverage, however, would be restricted. Beijing would find it difficult, if not impossible, to sustain Thai cooperation in supporting Cambodian resistance forces at current levels. Although sympathetic Thai officials might be amenable to a modest aid program for resistance elements, Beijing's opportunities for increasing military pressure on the Vietnamese and PRK would be sharply circumscribed. Removal of the Cambodia issue as a common cause with ASEAN would slow the overall diplomatic headway Beijing has made in Southeast Asia over the past few years. Beijing would also weigh Vietnam's degree of involvement with the Soviet Union in determining its policy toward Indochina. [ ]

53. For the *USSR*, broad acceptance of a Vietnamese fait accompli in Cambodia, particularly one reached on amicable terms, would improve its prospects for developing closer ties to Southeast Asian states. Moscow, however, would probably have difficulty in exploiting such a turn of events to improve relations with China. Beijing would probably make new demands of Moscow to reduce support for Hanoi in hopes of promoting a split between the Vietnamese and Soviets. [ ]

54. Vietnamese success could over the longer term reduce Hanoi's dependence on Soviet assistance and consequently reduce Moscow's political leverage there. Eventually, Moscow's use of Vietnamese military facil-



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ities might be curtailed. On balance, however, we believe the Soviets' broader interests are best served by resolution of the Cambodian conflict on Hanoi's terms.

#### Implications for the United States

55. If the ASEAN consensus broke down as Hanoi imposed its solution, the United States would face pressure to take sides with the opposing ASEAN members. There could be recriminations from Singapore and Thailand over US reluctance to provide military aid to the non-Communist resistance. Indonesia and Malaysia, on the other hand, might look to the United States to persuade the hardliners to compromise. Thailand, with support from Singapore and Malaysia, would seek stronger US security guarantees and greater arms assistance. Under a settlement formula acceptable to ASEAN the way would be smoothed for eventual normalization of US-Vietnam-

ese relations, which would in turn offer improved prospects for resolving other issues.

56. A potential casualty of such a turn of events would be the current congruence of Chinese and US interest in opposing Hanoi's policy. Given its fundamental strategic concerns over an entrenched Vietnamese control of Indochina, Beijing would not be likely to accept US rationale for increasing dealings with Hanoi and would seek new ways to prevent Hanoi from gaining its ends.

57. However achieved, a settlement in Cambodia that left a Communist administration in Phnom Penh would, in our judgment, lead a significant proportion of the 230,000 displaced Khmer now in encampments inside Thailand to elect not to return to their country. This would create pressure on the UN system and its donor countries to continue indefinitely the relief program for these people, and would almost certainly generate Thai pressure on the United States to resettle many of them as refugees.

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## ANNEX A

The Capabilities and Order of Battle of Vietnamese Forces in Cambodia <sup>5</sup>

We believe that the Vietnamese forces permanently based in Cambodia, augmented by the existing People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) forces, can accomplish most of the security missions that Hanoi envisions for its forces:

- Demonstrating control of the border and its environs to prevent establishment of a "liberated area" and to reduce levels of infiltration by resistance forces.



- Securing the Cambodian interior sufficiently to enhance the legitimacy of Heng Samrin's PRK regime and permit delegation to PRK forces of a greater degree of responsibility for rear area security.



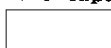
Vietnamese troops in Cambodia as of 1 September are estimated to number about 130,000 to 140,000. This new estimate, down from the previous one of

<sup>5</sup> This annex reproduces the Key Judgments of Interagency Intelligence Memorandum NI IIM 85-10010, published with the above title in October 1985 as a companion to this Estimate.

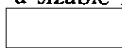
150,000 to 170,000, reflects both modest troop withdrawals and a reanalysis of existing data.

Vietnam has improved its logistic system in Cambodia to the point where there are no major shortages of ammunition or petroleum products.

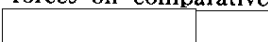
Hanoi is dependent on Soviet military aid, which is abundant (Vietnam ranks seventh among Soviet aid recipients). We expect this level to continue—allowing some equipment modernization within the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), but not greatly increasing the capabilities of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia.



Vietnam has said that it intends to withdraw from Cambodia by 1990. Although Hanoi probably would like to reduce its forces, we not only find this date unrealistic, but believe that Hanoi intends to maintain a sizable military presence in Cambodia indefinitely.



Should the fortunes of the Vietnamese and PRK forces in Cambodia take a turn for the worse, Hanoi has a demonstrated capability to bring in additional forces on comparatively short notice



If, over a period of a year or more, non-Communist resistance forces succeed in efforts to operate independently in the rear areas, some augmentation of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia may be necessary.

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